



Land Agreements Guide consultation complete

May was a significant month for Grow PNG. A consultant engaged to work on developing a Land Agreements Guide has completed consultations with various partners.

The two week consultation covered large agribusinesses, government departments, farmer cooperatives and other organisations that have an interest in the agriculture sector in the Markham valley in Morobe Province.

The development of the guide was an important work identified by the Land Access Working Group in February.

The guide is being developed to address what was identified by the Land Access Working Group as miss understanding or miss interpretations of land deal agreements as well as lack of sufficient information on how to access land for agricultural developments.

Customary land owner groups do not fully understand what is required from an agribusiness partner or an investor and likewise the investor may rush into land deal agreement without being fully aware of the implications that may

arise even after a land deal agreement is established.

The land access working group gathered that it would be helpful for all relevant stakeholders to have a shared information mechanism that would publish all the different land access related stakeholders' requirements.

Potential investors are hesitant to negotiate partnership deals and acquiring customary land lease for investment because of insufficient information about land ownership requirements. On the other hand, some customary land owners are keen to develop their customary land through different options either through land leasing for business ventures or going into partnership with an interested investor.

Consultations with the Morobe Provincial Customary Lands officer, Denver Utah indicates that quite a few incorporated land groups (ILGs) have been formed in the Markham valley area under his facilitation and are now seeking opportunity for partnership and investments.

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Key strategic focuses for 2020-2021

Focus Area 1

Establish an Advisory Council to provide strategic direction to Grow PNG's work.

Focus Area 2

Promote and encourage women's participation in agriculture.

Focus Area 3

Build new partnerships and strengthen existing ones through learning and networking events, consultations and information sharing.

Honorable John Simon
Minister for Agriculture
& Livestock
Member of Parliament
PNG Government

“The objectives of Grow PNG are consistent with what we want. We want to build our country by empowering our people through the development of a strong and vibrant agriculture sector backed by large businesses to help grow our farmers into vibrant small to medium enterprises.”

Hand Up Program aims to help

COVID-19 has had an adverse impact on the livelihoods of people in Lae and throughout the country, especially for those living in urban centres.

The pandemic also brought together Government agencies, businesses and individuals to find ways to help the people who have been affected.

In Lae, a program focusing on helping those most affected living in the six Lae Urban LLG wards and 17 Ahi Rural LLG wards is being developed.

The Lae City Hand Up Program is a collaboration between the Lae City Authority (LCA) and partners in response to the COVID-19. The program is in partnership with Australian Consulate-

General Lae as part of the PNG-Australia Partnership Program through Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

It is supported by PNG-Australia Governance Partnership, Grow PNG, Morobe provincial government and various organisations such as Westpac, Friends of the Garden City of Lae and the Lae Chamber of Commerce Incorporated.

On May 22, the LCA and Australian Consulate-General Lae signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to deliver the program.

The parties aim to deliver cash-for-work opportunities for up to 1000 Lae city residents and cooperate in the delivery of up to 100 community projects.

The ward councilors and the LCCI are the referral pathways for those willing to participate in the program.

Late this month 12 women were the first lot to be selected after a screening process. They participated in a financial literacy training delivered by the Westpac bank staff. Those without a Westpac bank account also had their accounts opened after the training.

"I am grateful to all those involved in this program. I had a hard time trying to take care of my children," one of the women said.

Seed garden project underway at Erap



A seed garden project at Erap in Markham began in early May with ploughing of land to prepare for cultivation of quality seeds and planting materials.

Clean seeds and planting materials derived from mature food crops from this garden will then be given to interested people and food crop farmers in the urban and rural areas to grow for own consumption and to sell.

The project was in response to COVID-19 and to the call by the Morobe COVID-19 Emergency Response team to address food security.

The pandemic has brought to the forefront the importance of food security and issues associated with it such as having uninterrupted supply of fresh and organic garden food and sustainability of fresh garden food projects.

The project is in partnership with PNG Women in Agriculture (PNGWiA), Trukai Industries Ltd, DAL, National Agricultural Research Institute, Fresh Produce Development Foundation and Taiwan Technical Mission.

President of PNGWiA Maria Linibi said the partners contribution towards the

project would include supplying seeds, planting materials and provision of machinery.

The Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) provided 20 hectares of government land at Erap for the project.

"Farmers will benefit from getting clean planting materials and seeds from this project," DAL acting regional director Ario Movis said.

The ground breaking event for the seed garden was held on May 6 at Erap.

Any organisation is welcome to become a partner of Grow PNG and its Working Groups. Partners are expected to have an interest in the country and agriculture, a commitment to supporting smallholders and rural development and an openness to partner with other organisations in a pre-competitive space.



Land Agreements Guide consultation complete

Past learnings from few agribusiness players and investors have shown disruptions on business plans and operations even after legal agreement was established.

This land access user guide intends to bring awareness to specific stakeholders such as ILGs, cooperative societies, businesses and investors on the different requirements that each stakeholder need to know in order to establish successful land deal agreements.

The guide also intends to provide standard information to encourage effective support by the public sector such as Government departments and also supporting agencies such as development organizations and financial institutions.

At Grow PNG, we believe that this guide will help a lot of stakeholders including land owners, ILGs, cooperative societies and farmers by communicating their requirements to potential agribusiness investors on what they would expect out from a land deal agreement. This would guide the investors to know and understand the land owners requirements before going into partnership deals on either business intervention or land lease.

The guide will also communicate to the land owners, cooperatives and ILGs what is also required by the investor. Through this user guide, all parties will become aware of each other's expectations and requirements. Grow PNG anticipates this would somewhat ease the chances of misunderstanding and miss interpretation of information on land agreement deals.

Dr Rodney Kameata, a renown Papua New Guinean sociologist, and principal of Social Environmental Research and Consultancy Ltd, was contracted by Grow PNG to facilitate the development of the Land Agreements Guide. Dr Kameata commenced his consultation in Lae on

Monday, May 18, 2020.

More than 30 consultation meetings were conducted with various stakeholders including the National and Provincial Lands Department, the Morobe Provincial Administration, Department of Agriculture and Livestock, Erap. Supporting agencies such as Fresh Produce Development Agency, Morobe Primary Producers Cooperative Association, Lae Chamber of Commerce Incorporated and the Morobe Provincial Fisheries. A good number of land owner groups were consulted including Chingwam Rice Farmer Cooperative Society, Poang rice development under the Luhu ILG and Yalu Plantation.

Ms Yangu Bowasi, Women's Representative for the Atchiang Women Cooperative Society gave insights about the cooperative and on how SME models are workable for the women members, overarching the issue on land access.

Large commercial business such as Mainland Holdings, Farmset and Trukai gave informative insights about their requirements as current and potential investors while Hore Agricultural Services and Takom shared experiences of their business ventures through mutual land owner relationships, which highlighted dire need for the Government to look at how best it could support local semi commercial agribusiness's such as them .

Financial institutions such as National Development Bank Erap and capacity building organizations like Tok Stret were also part of the consultation process.

The consultation meeting with stakeholders not only provided information needed for the user guide but has also brought out some key issues that are being faced by the different stakeholders, especially the existing agribusiness players along the Markham Valley area.

One of the many issues identified was the lack of awareness and limited knowledge on how a commercial entity functions. This has created expectations on incentives such as benefits and return of investment, causing disruptions on existing business interventions and also creates hesitance for more and new investment opportunity.

It is also under the mandate of Grow PNG to look into some of these key issues and to work closely with the Markham District, the Morobe Provincial Government and business community to develop strategies on how to potentially address some of these key findings.

Eight different business models were identified from the existing Agribusinesses that are operating around the Markham Valley area, while three other models are still in the process of designing. Almost eighty percent of these models involves Small-Holder Contract Farming with less issues relating to land access.

Grow PNG Ltd is aiming to conduct basic awareness workshop to relevant stakeholders once the User guide is completed. The workshops will be designed according to different target groups such as land owners and business community so that the user guide information is effectively absorbed on various levels as much as possible.

The Land Agreements Guide development work has broadened my understanding on the different dynamics of strategies that is required on a case by case scenario in order for the land to be made available for agricultural development as long as a business model does not interfere with the land ownership.



BY RUTHY KUSAK
Working Group Coordinator
Grow PNG

model farmer DOUGLAS KAWA



- 1 hectare fish farm with 7 ponds
- 10,000 fish holding capacity
- 3-year lease agreement with DAL



Fish farming for food security

Farming fish in ponds requires a lot of work, time and commitment. It is also important for food security.

The process to finally having the right size of fish for the commercial market or simply put, to sell to food businesses such as supermarkets is long but rewarding.

Douglas Kawa is an example of the virtue of commitment when it comes to farming fish in ponds. He has been doing this work for many years and has 12 years experience in helping small medium enterprises.

Douglas is the go to 'fish man' (aquaculture scientist) for advice on commercial fish farming, fish fingerlings breeding, pond construction, fish feed, backyard fish farming and whatever is needed to farm fish in an enclosed area. He has contributed to farming fish in ponds and cages in the Eastern Highlands, Morobe and even Manus.

In October last year he revived a fish farming project at Erap in Markham District, Morobe Province.

"The idea is to grow fish for commercial sale to address food security. Food security is ensuring there is enough food available at all times. Farming fish can achieve that and fish is also a good protein," Douglas said.

Douglas is expecting to sell his first tilapia fish in July to earn K5000 to K6000 if he sells one fish for K1.00.

"The ponds are fully stocked and by July

we will harvest. When we harvest 5000 to 6000 fish after four months, we then restock so we meet the demand every month.

While his first lots of fish are now ready for harvesting and selling, others are already in different breeding stages to ensure he has a steady supply for the commercial market.

The one hectare fish farm is owned by PNG Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL). Douglas restarted the project under a three-year commercial lease agreement and for food security under DAL programs.

GIFT (genetically improved farmed Tilapia) brooders came from Eastern Highlands because of the high quality in breeds. There are seven ponds and each pond has the capacity to hold 10, 000 tilapia fish.

The farm is specially designed to allow continuous but controlled flow of fresh water from the water source into each pond because productivity and supply depends on the water level.

The top tilapia fish producing countries in the world are Philippines, Vietnam, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan, Myanmar, Colombia, Ecuador, Malaysia, Uganda, Zambia, Costa Rica, Nigeria and Bangladesh.

Some of the health benefits of Tilapia fish are; good for brain, bone, weight loss and heart.

AGRI PARTNERSHIPS

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